

SECRET

JOURNAL

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL

Thursday - 29 April 1971

25X1 1. [] - JMM) Met with Senator George McGovern and Mr. John Holum, of the Senator's staff, in response to the Senator's letter to the Director of 13 April 1971 inquiring about possible Agency knowledge of or indirect involvement in drug traffic in Southeast Asia. (See Memo for Record for details.)

25X1 2. [] - GLC) Victor Zafra, OMB, called and gave clearance on our sending our proposed letter on S. 1438 to Senator Ervin. Zafra said they would have preferred to wait until the Civil Service Commission testifies before the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee on similar legislation, but he said OMB appreciated our desire to set the record straight with Senator Ervin. He said if significant changes are made the Administration could conceivably approve it. On the other hand, it was also quite possible they would seriously consider a veto if such changes are not made. He asked that we eliminate the "advice" sentence of our letter.

25X1 3. [] GLC) Ed Braswell, Chief Counsel, Senate Armed Services Committee, called to say General Bruce Holloway, Commander of the Strategic Air Command, will be briefing the Committee tomorrow and asked if one of our "top men" could come up and give Chairman Stennis and him a briefing on the threat at 9:30 tomorrow morning. I called later and advised Mr. Maury and Mr. Bruce Clarke would be there at 9:30 a.m.

25X1 4. [] - LLM) In an effort to close out her inquiry last week (see Journal of 26 April), called Miss Rosalind Hoffman, in the office of Representative Robert Drinan, and referred her to House Government Operations Committee reports on the use of polygraphs by the Federal Government. This appeared to satisfy her immediate interest. (The reference to the Committee reports was based upon advice of Messrs. [] Osborne, Security.)

25X1A Miss Hoffman then asked about the Agency position on Representative Bob Wilson's and Senator Sam Ervin's bills relating to the constitutional rights of employees (H. R. 7199 and S. 1438). I told her that in past Congresses the Agency had made its views known to the committees having jurisdiction over this proposed legislation with respect to the need for exemption.

SECRET

ILLEGIB

ALLEGATION

"... CIA has committed the U.S. to support a faction of Meo tribesmen led by General Vang Pao whose sole objective is to dominate other factions of this opium producing Meo tribe throughout northern Laos."

"CIA has involved us in this covert operation which is being fought around the Plaine des Jarres more than 1,000 miles away from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and

"... this tribal war has as one of its prizes an area capable of producing on an annual basis 4 to 10 tons of marketable opium... Refined as heroin and sold on the streets of Los Angeles it would bring nearly \$900 million... The clandestine yet official operations of the U.S. Government could be aiding and abetting heroin traffic here at home."

FACT

The original decision to support the Meo tribesmen under Vang Pao was made by President Kennedy in 1961. Following the Geneva Agreement of 1962 U.S. advisors were withdrawn. But in 1963 when it became obvious that the North Vietnamese had no intention of observing Laos neutrality and in response to appeals by Vang Pao, the U.S. resumed logistical and materiel support.

The charge that Vang Pao seeks to dominate other factions throughout northern Laos apparently overlooks the fact that Vang Pao's troops are engaged solely in defending their own homeland against vastly superior invading forces--67,000 North Vietnamese troops.

The Plaine des Jarres is only 300 miles from the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and operations there have a direct impact on the enemy's use of the Trail.

Opium is indeed grown in northern Laos, but that produced by the Meo tribes is consumed locally and does not reach the export market. Most of the opium exported from Southeast Asia comes from Burma. According to the Bureau of Narcotics, all of Southeast Asia provides only 5% of the opium and opium derivatives sold in the U.S.

In fact over the past several years U.S. advisors have successfully persuaded the Meo's to substitute cash crops of rice and livestock in order to reduce their reliance on opium. U.S. airlines operating in the Far East, including Laos, employ stringent security precautions against smuggling of all kinds including opium.

NOTE:

According to the New Yorker magazine (attached) Representative Tunney's advisor on Southeast Asian affairs is a Princeton professor named John T. McAlister, Jr. In fact Mr. McAlister is a 30-year old assistant professor whose book, mentioned in the New Yorker, originated as a university thesis dealing with Vietnamese history of 25 years ago (1945-1946).



THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

ON March 24th, Representative John V. Tunney, a California Democrat who seeks his party's nomination for United States senator, addressed the Wilshire Chamber of Commerce in Los Angeles and made some charges about our involvement in Laos that have not, as far as we have been able to learn, previously been made. We yield the floor to the Congressman:

We are today engaged... in a secret war in Laos, a tribal war in which the C.I.A. has committed the United States to support a faction of Meo tribesmen, led by General Vang Pao, whose sole objective is to dominate other factions of this opium-producing Meo tribe throughout Northern Laos. The C.I.A. has involved us in this covert operation, which is being fought around the Plain of Jars, more than one thousand miles away from the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Administration has deliberately veiled in secrecy our deepening involvement in an opium tribal war which has the potential to engulf all of Southeast Asia in a full-fledged conflict which would have global repercussions.... On grounds of moral indignation, as a defender of democracy, we have unwittingly allowed ourselves to become involved in a situation which, to the Meo tribesman or Laotian warlord, has very little to do with his major cash crop—opium. For this tribal war has, as one of its prizes, an area capable of producing, on an annual basis, four to ten tons of marketable opium. This is equal to from two to six million dollars in Laotian currency. Refined as heroin and sold on the streets of Los Angeles, it would bring nearly nine hundred million dollars.... The clandestine yet official operations of the United States government could be aiding and abetting heroin traffic here at home.

Representative Tunney is in the middle of a hard campaign, and this is, of course, campaign oratory. It so happens, though, that his adviser on Southeast Asian affairs is Professor John T. McAlister, Jr., of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, at Princeton, who is the author of "Viet-Nam: The Origins of Revolution" and is probably the most eminent scholar in the Southeast Asian field. Suspecting that it was on his authority that the candidate made these extraordinary assertions, we checked with the Professor and found that this was indeed the case. He would, he said, swear to the truth of them in any forum. The next move, we should think, would be up to Senator Fulbright.